

**Testimony before the Judiciary Committee**  
**Raised Bill # 5531 - An Act Concerning the Care and Treatment of Persons with a Mental Illness or**  
**Substance Use Disorder**  
**Tracie Z Compositor, Ellington**

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Tracie Compositor and I am here to testify today in opposition to HB 5531.

I am a person with lived experience and have utilized both mental health and addiction services. For years I was in treatment for mental health issues and placed on dozens of medications. Through all of the trials - titrating up and then weaning off - nothing was working so I self-medicated with drugs and alcohol.

I'm telling you this because I know in my heart that I would never have sought help if there was a possibility of being forced into treatment. I needed to be ready, in my own time, to accept what was being offered.

As it turned out, many times what was offered wasn't something I was interested in and I half-heartedly participated and often ended up not following through. Various types of group therapy were not effective for me.

Ultimately, I ended up doing my own research to find a program and thankfully my providers listened. Then, and only then, did I begin on my journey of recovery. Since beginning my recovery process, my path has not been linear, but **when I am moving forward in a way that makes sense to me, I keep going.**

If this bill passes, I can assure you that I will never again seek traditional services out of fear that my right to choose will be taken away because of my documented mental health history. I'd invite you to walk with me through a scenario - I hit a bump in my recovery road. I go to see someone for treatment. This licensed professional reviews my history and makes the determination that I am potentially a danger to myself and then decides what type of treatment I will be mandated to participate in and, worse yet, what medication I will be ordered to take. When do I get a clean slate?

I'm here to report that people, like myself, do live well and do achieve recovery. On May 31<sup>st</sup>, God willing, I will be 4 years sober. I do not take any medication except for an occasional Tylenol and that is even rare. I choose to use non-traditional services and supports – and it is working wonders for me.

I have found a support system, people who will listen to me and give me constructive feedback and encouragement with no judgment and certainly not an ultimatum. I respond very well to this approach and have found that many of my peers do as well.

I am now the Program Director at Focus on Recovery for the Community Bridger Program called "Anatar miTana." Community Bridgers connect with the people who have had long term involvement with the mental health and/or substance use service system and have not engaged with the services that have been offered to them thus far. We offer peer delivered support to individuals who end up in Probate Court for the purposes of Civil Commitment, or those who are at risk of being committed. We meet the person where they are at, not just physically but emotionally, with no agenda!

We have success stories due to our methods, one of which I'd like to share with you. When we met her the State said she was a "lifer" on the inpatient unit where she had been for years. She also referred to the unit as her "home". After connecting with her and developing a relationship over the next four months, she moved

into the community in New Britain. Over the next few months, she blossomed. Recently, she experienced the loss of her mother and she handled it without any setbacks due to her personal growth and utilization of the supports that she has made.

**"Never be defined by your past. It was just a lesson, not a life sentence."** This statement is a Facebook post that I can appreciate due to my past. I continue to grow and learn because of my journey, a path I am truly grateful to be able to choose freely.